

♠♥♦♣ EIGHT EVER – NINE NEVER ♠♥♦♣

West, the dealer, passes. Your partner opens 1♣ and East overcalls 2♥. This is your hand.

<b>S</b>	undefined
♠	K10543
♥	A652
♦	K5
♣	A7

With 14 HCP and a 5-card spade suit, your response is an easy 2♠. You plan to play in a game somewhere.

Partner raises you to 3♠ and you carry on to 4♠.

West leads the ♥8. How would you plan the play?

<b>N</b>	undefined
♠	AJ72
♥	107
♦	J64
♣	KQJ5

West leads ♥8

<b>S</b>	undefined
♠	K10543
♥	A652
♦	K5
♣	A7

East's jump overcall implies a weak hand with 6 hearts. If so, West ♥8 is a singleton. You want to make sure you win you're ♥A on this first trick.

In a suit contract, you start by counting losers. You have a possible spade loser, 3 heart losers and 2 diamond losers. You can ruff one or two hearts in the dummy and finesse for the ♠Q. You also have a possible finesse of the ♦K. The biggest help will come from the long club suit in the dummy. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> clubs will give you two discards in your hand. How do you start?

Start by winning the ♥A. Secondly, there is no reason not to pull trump. You won't need them to ruff hearts if you can discard two losers on the clubs.

But will you finesse against the ♠Q or play for the drop? The famous bridge adage, Eight Ever – Nine Never, can help you decide. It is based on the fact that there is slight probability advantage that the ♠Q will drop under the ♠AK when you hold 9 cards. The advantage favors the finesse when you only hold 8 cards.

In isolation, this adage suggests you play for the drop. However, all adages, guidelines and maxims have exceptions based on other factors that might be in play. Here, you have a vulnerable diamond holding. If West holds the ♦A, then East, if he gets the lead, can lead a diamond through you and you can lose two quick diamond tricks. Playing for the drop still has a good probability of failing, and if East hold the ♠Qxx, you will not be able to play four rounds of clubs before East ruffs in and leads the diamond. So, based on the theory of "avoidance", you want to take the finesse through East. You don't care if it loses to West because West cannot get his partner on lead (he has no more hearts), or attack diamonds profitably.

You lead a spade up to the ♠A and run the ♠J. The finesse actually works and you can take all the spades. Now play off all the clubs, discarding the two losing diamonds, not the hearts. You still have a trump left in the dummy to ruff 1 heart. You will only lose two hearts – making an overtrick.

This is the entire deal:

D 8	N undefined	W N E S
	♠ AJ72 ♥ 107 ♦ J64 ♣ KQJ5	P 1♣ 2♥ 2♠ P 3♣ P 4♣ P P P
W undefined	E undefined	
♠ 9 ♥ 8 ♦ AQ973 ♣ 986432	♠ Q86 ♥ KQJ943 ♦ 1082 ♣ 10	
	S undefined	
	♠ K10543 ♥ A652 ♦ K5 ♣ A7	4♠ S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/y9e2smoh>, or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. If you don't want to see the opponents hands, click on the white area in the South hand before you start.

Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.